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President Ben Shelly Commemorates the Life of Code Talker Jimmie Begay



WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – The Navajo Nation mourns the loss of another heroic Code Talker.

Sgt. Jimmie Begay, 88, passed away Wednesday night at Tsehootsoi Medical Center in Fort Defiance, Ariz. Sgt. Begay trained to become a code talker at Camp Elliot. He then served in the 1st Marine Division, 2nd Battalion.

Code Talker Begay took part in campaigns at Guadalcanal, Bougainville, Guam, Saipan, and Tinian.

President Shelly ordered the Navajo Nation flag to be flown at half-staff from Thursday, Feb. 2, through sundown Sunday, Feb. 5, to honor Sgt. Begay for his service to his country in World War II.

“I am deeply saddened by the loss of Sgt. Begay. His efforts to defend this country and his people make me proud. My prayers, and the prayers of the First Lady, the

Vice President and the Navajo Nation are with the family,” said President Shelly.

Code Talker Begay enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps in November 1942, when he was 17 years old. From Fort Wingate, N.M., he boarded a bus for Camp Pendleton, Calif., where he would complete boot camp before transferring to Camp Elliot to train as a Navajo Code Talker.

After completing his service in the Marines in 1945, Begay received an honorable discharge. He then finished his schooling at Santa Fe Indian High School and worked as a guard at the Army Depot-Japanese Internment Camp in Leupp, Ariz. He even competed in the sport of boxing before going into the Navajo Forest Products Industry. He retired from NFPI in 1985.

Code Talker Begay earned numerous commendations for his brave and honorable feats in the Pacific, including the Congressional Silver Medal in 2001.

Code Talker Begay is preceded in death by his wife, Sophie Begay; parents, Carl Begay and Nazbah Blackgoat; brothers, Kenneth M. Begay and Kee Begay; sisters, Ruth Stewart and Lottie Randall; son, Perry Begay.

Code Talker Begay is survived by his son, Thurman Begay of Sawmill, Ariz.; grandchildren, Jacquelyn A. Begay and Janelle R. Begay of Sawmill, Ariz., Scott Begay and Rhonda Roan of Albuquerque, N.M.; and five great-grandchildren.

Funeral services are scheduled for Saturday, Feb. 4 at the Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament in Fort Defiance, Ariz. Code Talker Begay will be buried at the family cemetery in Red Lake, N.M.

Family meetings will be held at the Ft. Defiance Chapter House on Feb. 2 and 3, at 4pm.

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